

THE

CLERGY VINDICATED

FROM THE

CHARGE OF HOSTILITY TO THE DIFFUSION
OF SCIENCE;

BEING AN

ANSWER TO THE PAMPHLET

OF

MR H. G. WRIGHT.

BY A PHRENOLOGIST.

John McTearrie Minister of Dunblode 1838

“Reasons, my Lord! there are no *reasons* there,
But some young witling fain would try his wings
In empty declamation.”

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THE CLERGY VINDICATED, &c.

A MR H. G. WRIGHT, like the hero of La Mancha, has suddenly emerged from a harmless obscurity, and astonished the world by a tilt against the prospectus of the "Christian Herald," as the latter did by his famous adventure with the windmill. His morbid jealousy for the honour of "science in general and of Phrenology in particular" has actually magnified the said document into a giant of hostile mein; and we know not whether to admire most the consummate skill with which he has overthrown this ideal adversary, or the magnanimity with which he condescends to reason with his prostrate foe on the infatuation of traducing the teachers of secular knowledge. Sorry indeed should we be needlessly to repress his exultation in the hour of triumph by calling in question his claim to the palm of victory; but as we happen to be doubtful whether his antagonist has had fair play in this encounter, we must summon them to the field again with the same weapons, while we assume the office of umpire.

But to be serious (no easy task, we can assure our readers, when reviewing the achievements of Mr H. G. Wright); of all the devices resorted to for the purpose of undermining the influence of the clergy, we know of none more characteristic of those who boast themselves the enlightened advocates of liberality, or more calculated to effect their unhallowed object, than that of arraigning the former before the tribunal of public opinion as enemies to the diffusion of knowledge. Were the clergy indeed to deem it worth their while to refute every idle calumny which is circulated against them, their task *would* be an "endless one;" but, to borrow Mr H. G. Wright's terse and emphatic diction,—when charges having *some* semblance of truth are brought against them,—though that semblance be

slight indeed,—and especially when their own words are quoted as evidence against them, as has been done by Mr H. G. Wright, it is befitting to give the world assurance of their innocence, by shewing how entirely groundless such charges really are. These considerations alone have induced us to notice a production in itself so utterly insignificant.

When we found Mr H. G. Wright quoting the prospectus of the “Scottish Christian Herald” to prove that the conductors of that periodical were opposed to the dissemination of knowledge, and proceeded to read his extracts, we could scarcely believe our eyes when they alighted on the passages, where the writer of the prospectus declares that Religion should be “going forth in the might of the Lord to meet the gigantic foe *on the very terms of his own challenge* ;” and adds, “she may not indeed adopt his unholy spirit, but righteously she may *wield his own weapon* for consummating her godly triumph.” Do not these very passages contain an ample refutation of the charge, in confirmation of which Mr H. G. Wright has quoted them ; and ought they not to have satisfied him that the writer was objecting, not to the *dissemination* of science, but to something defective in the present *mode* of its dissemination, and that he was attacking the “directors of literary machinery,” not in their character as teachers of *truth*, but in their character as teachers of *error* ? But Mr H. G. Wright, in breathless haste to arrive at the conclusion, stops not to examine the soundness of his premises, and, assuming that the writer of the prospectus accuses *all* teachers of science of proceeding in *that* capacity in the “might of the devil,” he proceeds to amuse himself and his readers with contemplating the father of lies “in the somewhat novel and anomalous situation of lending his powerful aid in spreading the truths of science, and inculcating the beauty of morality and religion.” He then travels in imagination to the regions below, and, *mirabile dictu* !, finds the alleged abode of the wicked “occupied by highly moral beings !”

We are always loath to interrupt *innocent* mirth, and prefer joining in it ourselves ; but since Mr H. G. Wright has thought proper to amuse himself *at the expense of others*, we have no scruple in interrupting him, for the purpose of putting to him a few grave questions.

Did he never hear, then, of the "father of lies" personating "*an angel of light*," and will he venture to affirm that this is either a "*novel*" or an "*anomalous*" character for him to assume? Is he not aware that a far higher authority than any he can quote in opposition to it, has declared that it is "*no great thing if Satan's ministers be transformed as the ministers of righteousness?*" Does he really attribute to the prince of darkness such wretched policy as to suppose that he would send error abroad in search of victims without first veiling her under the specious covering of truth; or that he would administer the poison of infidelity, pure and unadulterated, instead of infusing it in the cup of knowledge? Is Mr H. G. Wright so ignorant of the past history of the world, as not to be aware that no weapon has been more successfully employed by Satan for the accomplishment of his deep-laid machinations than religion with the alloy of error? And if he make *religion* subservient to his designs, why not *philosophy* too? The history of infidelity abundantly proves that he does. The clergy entertain no dread of the dissemination of *truth*, either religious or secular. On the contrary they encourage both, and that, too, even in the *Christian Herald*.* But knowing, as they well do, that error is never so dangerous as when combined with a sufficient amount of truth to give it currency, they do look with suspicion on those teachers of human science who either attempt to undermine the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, or enforce the study of nature as revealing all that is requisite for man to know. Who would deny that in so far as lecturers on science inculcate the duty of keeping the moral faculties "*habitually in action*," and "*expound the great laws by which the universe is governed*," they do well? But does Mr H. G. Wright suppose that this is all that is necessary to render man a "*highly moral being?*" Far more must be done in order to reclaim the naturally profligate, and to render them fit recipients of secular knowledge, than merely to unfold to them the principles of their constitution, and the relations sub-

* The 16th number of this periodical contains an article on "*The Advantages to be derived by the Christian from the Study of Natural Science*," in which the author, after alluding to the facilities now afforded for "*promoting the instruction of the young, and of the labouring classes of society*," adds, "*and the mind must be dark that does not approve of the object proposed; and the heart must be hard that does not wish it success.*"

sisting between these and the external world. "In vain," says the eloquent and philosophic Hall, "in vain will they ' (the teachers of mere morality),' expatiate on the tranquillity and pleasure attendant on a virtuous course ; for though you may remind the offender that in disregarding ' the dictates of conscience,' he has violated his nature, and that a conduct consistent with them is productive of much internal satisfaction ; yet, if he reply that his taste is of a different sort, that there are other gratifications which he values more, and that every man must choose his own pleasures, the argument is at an end." But of this more hereafter.

Mr H. G. Wright expresses great surprise at finding the name of the Rev. Dr Chalmers in the list of those who cordially approved of the design of the " Christian Herald ;" but his astonishment has no effect in making him hesitate before classing that eminent individual among the enemies of secular knowledge. He is, however, singularly unfortunate in never being able to adduce evidence in support of his charges, without supplying at the same time the materials of their refutation. He states as the chief ground of his surprise at finding Dr Chalmers's name where he thinks it ought not to be, that this very writer had on former occasions "*deprecated* that ' narrow, exclusive, and monopolising spirit' which he feared was too characteristic of the more declared professors of the truth as it is in Jesus,' and had subsequently *borne testimony to the beneficial effects flowing from the rapid progress of education.*" Yet Mr H. G. Wright, nothing daunted, eagerly darts at the conclusion that Dr Chalmers " views the diffusion of intellectual and moral knowledge as bordering upon hostility to the Gospel." What ! *Dr Chalmers* an enemy to *intellectual* and *moral* knowledge ? And who has made the dire discovery ? A Mr H. G. Wright.

No sooner, however, has Mr H. G. Wright announced his astounding discovery, than he begins to have some misgivings as to its reality, and suggests, that when such views are entertained by such men there must be " some strange misapprehension as to the nature and tendencies of the knowledge alluded to." He then makes a number of very witty and learned conjectures as to what this " strange misapprehension can be," and asks with a naiveté *peculiarly* his own, " are the lec-

tures of Dr Hope and Professors Wilson and Jameson, in the college, less hostile to the Gospel than those given by Dr Fyfe, Mr Combe, and Professor Nichol, in the Waterloo Rooms? Is there some latent poison lurking in the words of the latter?" Now, we can only say, that if Mr H. G. Wright cannot answer these questions satisfactorily to his own mind, he betrays a most culpable ignorance either of the doctrines of the church or of the doctrines of Mr Combe. Of the lectures of Dr Fyfe and Professor Nichol we know nothing, never having attended them; but this we unhesitatingly affirm, that if *Mr Combe's* lectures be like his work on the Constitution of Man, there is poison in his words, and that, too, neither "*latent*" nor "*lurking*." And can Mr H. G. Wright be ignorant of the fact, that in the later editions of the work alluded to, the author has openly attacked what the Church of Scotland, at least, holds to be the doctrines of Christianity? and if not, how can he be surprised that the clergy should deem such lectures as Mr Combe's, or any others which contain similar views, as "bordering upon hostility to the Gospel?"

But it seems after all, that, notwithstanding his anxiety to make out that the attack in the prospectus of the "Christian Herald" was directed against *all* the teachers of science indiscriminately, and notwithstanding his ambition to have the merit of discovering that Dr Chalmers, with all his philanthropical professions, is an enemy to knowledge, he cannot but perceive that the writer of the prospectus had one class of teachers particularly in his eye when he penned the sentences which have given such a shock to the philosophic feeling of Mr H. G. Wright. Accordingly, Mr H. G. Wright very shrewdly conjectures that the "anathema may be intended to be launched principally at Phrenology," and forthwith proceeds to narrow his line of defence, and to concentrate all the energies of his astonishing intellect on the noble enterprise of annihilating at once the religious objections to the science at present flourishing under his auspices.

It is indeed worthy of remark that the cap should happen to have been put on only by those whom it so exactly fits. We are not aware that any other class of scientific lecturers, writers, editors of journals or newspapers, *not phrenological*, have

considered the charge of seeking to undermine the Gospel as levelled against them. It is only the conscience-stricken Mr Combe, and the Scotsman newspaper, and the Phrenological Journal by the mouth of Mr H. G. Wright, that have thought it incumbent on them to put to silence the intolerant bigots who uttered it.

But we must return to our friend Mr H. G. Wright, whose amusing society we would not willingly lose for a moment.

Before proceeding to remove the false impressions regarding Phrenology from the minds of the "religious instructors of the community," he makes a digression for the purpose of shewing "the effect which has actually been produced on the human mind, so far as regards the spirit of Christianity, by the dissemination of mere secular knowledge." As we have not much to quarrel with in his remarks on this head, we shall be very brief in our review of them. In so far as Mr H. G. Wright advocates the subserviency of secular knowledge to the advancement of religion by undermining superstition and dissipating prejudice, we are at one with him, and so are the clergy, as is shewn by their adoption of Dr Duff's system of educating the Hindoos scientifically. But when he maintains, as he seems to do, that till the mind be enlightened by science, and particularly by the science of Phrenology, the Bible will, in most cases, be a dead letter, and traces all the heresies and superstitions of the Christian church to ignorance of science as their chief source, we are at perfect antipodes with him. It happens to be an ascertained fact, that, even during the darkest periods of the Church's history, there have always been a few who held the faith in its primitive purity, and this, not because they were in advance of their erring brethren in their acquaintance with science or Phrenology, but because they were men of more devoted piety and zeal. The cases which demand a previous acquaintance with science before the mind can either receive or rightly interpret the Gospel are peculiar. In a country like Hindostan, for example, where a vast and complicated system of superstition has been erected on the basis of a false but imposing philosophy, every one must perceive that it can only be overthrown by bringing the influence of *true* science to bear upon science "*falsely*

so called." But there are many heathen and savage countries where no such preparatory process is requisite. Mr H. G. Wright, indeed, quotes the experience of a Mr Timothy Flint, a missionary among the North American Indians, to prove that the mere preaching of the Gospel can produce no impression on uncivilized nations ; but the history of the Moravian Missions in Greenland tells a very different tale. " When their missionaries," says Mr Bridges in his work on the Christian Ministry, " explained to the sottish Greenlanders the nature and perfections of God, and his just claims upon his creatures, the poor heathen were bound up and frozen, like their own icy mountains. But, in reading to them the affecting scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, their hearts began to melt in tenderness, contrition, faith, and love. They begged to have the story repeated, and it was to them as ' life from the dead.'"

That secular knowledge alone is no guarantee for the strength of moral and religious principle, is a fact as well established as any truth in science, and we leave Mr H. G. Wright to explain why it is, if " mere secular knowledge" impart such a strong bias towards religion as he alleges, that so large a proportion of scientific men of eminence have been deists ? Innumerable instances might be adduced in proof of our position, but we need only refer to the state of literature and science in France immediately prior to the Revolution, than which we could not quote a case more in point. And Mr H. G. Wright must be aware that, by some individuals, and these, too, Phrenologists, Mr Combe's philosophy is thought, in some of its features, to bear a close resemblance to that which prevailed in France at this period. The truth is, that, so long as science and religion go hand in hand, they are mutually serviceable to each other ; but that if the former be unaccompanied by the latter, and gains an entrance into minds which have not previously been visited by religion, we behold nothing but melancholy examples of the apostolical aphorism, that " knowledge puffeth up," and thereby engenders a spirit of hostility to the Gospel. And, as to the revolution which it is supposed that Phrenology will effect in the received interpretations of Scripture, we can only say that we are decided Phrenologists, and instead of thinking that the discoveries of that science *controvert* the system of theology

propounded by Calvin three centuries ago, it has long been our conviction that they *confirm* it, and we know of many other phrenologists who entertain the same opinion.

We must now call the attention of our readers to Mr H. G. Wright's masterly refutation of the religious objections to Phrenology.

In the first place, he discusses the objection that this science cannot be true because its doctrines are inconsistent with revelation. Now we put it to Mr H. G. Wright whether it be either fair or honest in him to represent the clerical antiphrenologists, or indeed any antiphrenologists, as bringing this objection forward as their *sole* argument against Phrenology? We have been not less in the society of antiphrenologists than of phrenologists, and have fought many a hard battle in defence of the new doctrine; but never did we hear this objection urged in any other form save that of a *presumption* against the truth of the science, or a *corroboration* of other arguments. Nor are we aware that any public assailant of Phrenology has ever wielded this weapon *exclusively*. Even Mr Combe's reviewer in the Presbyterian Magazine attempts to refute the doctrines of Phrenology on philosophical as well as on religious grounds; and though we are far from vindicating the prejudice against Phrenology which prevents such opponents from reading the answers which have been given to their objections, still we think that Mr Combe and Mr H. G. Wright might shew some little toleration for conduct, of which even the former confesses he was himself at one time guilty. But instead of this, Mr H. G. Wright writes eloquent articles in the Phrenological Journal (for it was in that periodical that his pamphlet first appeared), and Mr Combe quotes the case of Galileo *usque ad nauseam*,—nay more, inserts a whole chapter in the "Constitution of Man," for the purpose of shewing the infatuation of divines in bringing religion and philosophy into collision, when, in point of fact, the utmost that can be proved against them is, that, *among other* reasons for objecting to Phrenology or Combism, they happen to mention the discrepancy which appears to them to exist between these systems and the doctrines of revelation.

The next objection that Mr H. G. Wright takes in hand is, that "Phrenology at best is but the wisdom of this world,

which is foolishness, and that the cultivators of science are men of this generation." This objection is so evidently a creation of Mr H. G. Wright's distempered fancy, that we shall leave him in undisturbed possession of the honour of having confuted it. But, at the same time, we are bold to deny that he ever heard the cultivators of science *as such* stigmatized as "men of this generation."

He next alludes to a class of objectors whom he represents as maintaining that even though Phrenology be true it is inconsistent with revelation, and therefore dangerous. "What!" he indignantly exclaims,—“the natural and written revelations of God inconsistent with each other! Is this seriously maintained? Impossible, surely!—Can the Deity contradict himself? Can the Being that inhabiteth eternity, unchangeable as that eternity—can he pronounce the works of his hand to be ‘good,’ and send a revelation to man denouncing them as dangerous? Can He unrol them to our wondering eyes, as displaying his wisdom and benevolence, and then proclaim that we must not look upon them? No! it is not God that forbids this, but man, poor fallible man!”

“Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu?

Parturiunt montes; nascetur ridiculus mus.”

Such was the exclamation with which we concluded our perusal of this impassioned burst. We would fain, however, treat the subject in a more serious light, and solemnly put the question to Mr H. G. Wright, to be answered by his own conscience, whether he has not been guilty of wilfully shutting his eyes to truth and common sense, for the sake of indulging in a rhetorical flourish? Is he, as he professes to be, a *friend* to religion? If so, how can he attempt to hold up the teachers of religion to the scorn of every intelligent man, by putting into their mouths sentiments which he must be aware they would repudiate as indignantly as he? When did he ever hear any rational being seriously maintain, that, even if Phrenology be *true*, it is inconsistent with revelation? It is possible indeed that he may have heard some weak-minded female give utterance to such a sentiment, not well knowing what she said; but this could never justify him in classing it among the prejudices alleged by him to be entertained by the clergy against Phreno-

logy, thereby imputing it to a body of men among whom are many far more enthusiastic votaries at the shrine of Science than their insignificant and impotent detractor, and at whose feet he might well deem it an honour to sit, and receive the lessons even of human wisdom.

After thus utterly discomfiting and putting to flight the opponents whom he undertook to conquer, Mr H. G. Wright proclaims with a loud voice,—“Are there any who still have lurking fears, that Phrenology usurps the place of Christianity, or treats the Gospel as ‘an old wives fable’? If so, let a short allegory, in conclusion, dispel their dread.” Was ever such a generous victor as Mr H. G. Wright?

In this allegory he represents the human mind as “a garden on which the sun of Christianity has been shining for centuries.” But unfortunately the account which he gives of the operations of the “*mental gardeners*,” as he, with singular felicity, designates them, is characterised by gross inconsistency. He describes the gardeners as “throwing over the seed;” and for a very good reason, because “they were unable to gain admission.” But then, mark the result. “They lamented that but a small portion sprang up and bore fruit.” Now, how did the “mental gardeners” ascertain this if, as he tells us, they could neither “gain admission, nor see over the walls?” Mr H. G. Wright does not inform the naturally inquisitive reader. A ladder would have solved the difficulty at once; but ladders are never alluded to by our ingenious author, and therefore the unfortunate gardeners ought to have been left on the outside of the garden-wall in a state of anxiety about the fate of the seed, until “the key of Phrenology threw open the door!” Would it not enhance the beauty, as well as contribute to the *consistency* of this allegory, to imagine Mr H. G. Wright producing the key himself, and throwing open the door? We close with one remark on the intelligence of the “mental gardeners.” They are represented as “*presuming* that something was wrong.” Not surprising, when they found the door was locked, the key gone (apply to Mr H. G. Wright), and their only alternative “throwing the seed over the wall.”

So much for Mr H. G. Wright’s attempt to convict the clergy of hostility to the diffusion of science.